

With the end of the Indian wars, Fort Laramie's usefulness to the government rapidly faded. The fort was abandoned in 1890 and sold at public auction. Fort Laramie slowly deteriorated over the next 48 years and nearly succumbed to the ravages of time. On July 16, 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a proclamation creating the Fort Laramie National Monument. With the determined efforts of local citizens and Wyoming State legislators, the preservation of the site is secure. The fort was redesignated a National Historic Site by an act of Congress on April 29, 1960. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. In 1978, it was expanded to its present size of 835 acres by an act of Congress.

The Fort Laramie National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service and is open to the public throughout the year. Interpretive programs are offered with living history talks and demonstrations available in the summer months. These programs offer visitors a chance to experience life on the frontier.

The site has an intensive preservation program to ensure the integrity of the historic structures for generations to come. Ten historic buildings have been completely restored and refurnished. These allow visitors a rare glimpse into the daily workings of a 19th century Indian Wars military post. The ruins and foundations of numerous other buildings are also preserved at this nationally significant historic treasure.

In celebration of the 175th anniversary of the founding of Fort Laramie, I invite my colleagues to visit the Fort Laramie National Historic Site. I congratulate the staff and volunteers whose dedication makes this piece of our history available to visitors from all over the world.

PRAGUE CONFERENCE ON HOLOCAUST ASSETS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I am delighted the Senate is poised to consider and pass S. Con. Res. 23 in support of the goals and objectives of the Prague Conference on Holocaust Era Assets.

The Prague Conference, which will be held June 26 through June 30, will serve as a forum to review the achievements of the 1998 Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets. That meeting brought together 44 nations, 13 non-governmental organizations, scholars, and Holocaust survivors, and helped channel the political will necessary to address looted art, insurance claims, communal property, and archival issues. The conference also examined the role of historical commissions and Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. While the Washington Conference was enormously useful, more can and should be done in all of these areas. Accordingly, the Prague Conference provides an important opportunity to identify specific addi-

tional steps that countries can still take.

The Holocaust left a scar that will not be removed by the Prague Conference. But this upcoming gathering provides an opportunity for governments to make tangible and meaningful progress in addressing this painful chapter of history. I commend the Czech Republic for taking on the leadership of organizing this meeting and welcome the appointment of Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat, former Treasury Deputy Secretary and former Department of State Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, to head the U.S. delegation to the Prague Conference. Ambassador Eizenstat is uniquely qualified to represent the United States at this historic gathering.

I would like to express my gratitude to Senators KERRY and LUGAR, the chair and ranking member, respectively, of the Foreign Relations Committee, for cosponsoring and reporting this resolution expeditiously.

REMEMBERING ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, born in a log cabin west of the Appalachians, Abraham Lincoln grew up in an average family with modest means. Yet despite only 18 months of education and family hardships, Lincoln's strength of character, persistence, and drive are among the many reasons he remains relevant to Americans today. Lincoln's legacy continues to impact the young and old alike even as our country changes and grows.

In an attempt to celebrate the life of the great Abraham Lincoln, an essay contest was held in Illinois, "The Land of Lincoln." Students across the State answered the question: Why is Abraham Lincoln still important today? The following essays celebrate the life and legacy of Lincoln and at the same time showcase the talent of young people across the great State of Illinois. I congratulate Megan Hendrickson, Ahsan Jiva, and Hannah Binnion for their extraordinary essays, and I encourage all students to continue to explore the history and lessons of our remarkable 16th President.

I ask unanimous consent to have the following three essays printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WHY IS ABRAHAM LINCOLN STILL IMPORTANT TODAY?

(By Megan Hendrickson, Sixth Grade, Miss Jaskowiak)

At the beginning of creation God created mankind in his own image with the intent that all would be treated equally. On January 1, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln established a document called the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the African American slaves from their slave owner's farms. But still, why is Abraham Lincoln still important today? First, Abe Lincoln abolished slavery. Next he kept the nation as one so we would act as one nation not two, and remain

strong. Last but not least, Abe led the nation through the Civil War as Commander in Chief.

President Abraham Lincoln put slavery to a halt when he signed the Emancipation Proclamation to abolish slavery. Today, this has had a huge impact on us. The slavery halt is one of the reasons we have our 44th President Barack Obama. If we still had slavery, we might be two separate nations, the North and the South, and many of the opportunities for African Americans that we have today, simply would not have been possible. When Abe stopped slavery it still didn't stop people from doing horrible things to people. Slavery had ended, but segregation and racial discrimination started. That was the worst part. Many of these things have taken more than a century to bring about change. We went through a time when African American people couldn't even go to school or ride on the bus with others, or they had to sit in the back. I believe if it weren't for Abraham Lincoln, some of these changes might not have even come about and we might still have segregation in schools and public transportation. I believe that Lincoln's feelings regarding race and equality were summed up when he said, "but there is only one race, the human race."

President Lincoln kept the country together at a time when the southern half of the nation was trying to separate from the Union over the issue of slavery. Lincoln said, "This nation cannot exist half slave and half free" and that "A house divided against itself cannot stand." The quote is relative to Abraham Lincoln holding the nation in one or in other words us being one with each other as a nation. Had Lincoln not taken such a strong stand against slavery, and had the strength and courage to hold this country together, our country might not be what it is today. Lincoln held strong to his faith and beliefs even though he knew it would bring about the Civil War.

Abe led the country through war as Commander in Chief, leading with pride and hope for our country. He had entered his Presidency with a task before him greater than he felt he himself could handle, but felt that with God's help and for the sake of our nation, he could not fail. Had Lincoln not had the courage to lead us into and through the Civil War, for the cause that he believed was right, where would our country be today?

Our nation and the world only have one race, the human race. I believe that President Lincoln believed this, and took a stand on his beliefs that have had more than a hundred years of changes in our nation. We all can see why Abraham Lincoln is important today by looking at history and seeing the changes that have taken place over time regarding race and equality. We should all work together as one nation to continue President Abraham Lincoln's legacy and belief that all men are created equal.

WHY IS ABRAHAM LINCOLN STILL IMPORTANT TODAY?

(By Ahsan Jiva, Grade 5, Mrs. L. Anderson)

Abraham Lincoln lived a great life. I don't think there will ever be a person as special and important as him. He helped stop slavery, he had famous speeches, and served as president. The list goes on and on. And that is why he still means so much to us today.

Abraham Lincoln grew up in Hardin County, Kentucky in 1809. As a child, Abraham Lincoln didn't go to school much, which to me is really hard to believe. When Lincoln grew older, the chopped rails and fences for a living. Even though he didn't go to college, he was still able to be a lawyer. After that he tried for the senate. But he didn't make it. Those are just some of the reasons why Lincoln is honored and respected today.